

# Edge Feathering

## Job Sheet

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)  
University of Missouri Extension – The School of Natural Resources

<b>For:</b>	<b>County:</b>
<b>Field(s):</b>	<b>Farm #:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tract #:</b>
<b>Designed By:</b>	<b>Contact Information:</b>

### PURPOSE:

Many wildlife species need dense shrubby/woody escape cover on a daily basis. Without this habitat component many wildlife species will be absent. Most field edges are abrupt changes from grass or crops to mature trees. Edge feathering is used to create woody escape cover along woodland edges, existing tree lines, woody draws, and hedgerows. This creates a transition zone of shrubs, vines, and herbaceous vegetation between cropland or grassland and wooded area. To be effective, edge feathering should be completed next to early successional vegetation such as managed wildlife friendly grasses/legumes, field borders, food plots or cropland.



### SPECIFICATIONS:

- Provide 0.1 to 1.0 acre of dense woody cover per 5-40 acres of wildlife friendly habitat. The minimum size of an area to edge feather is 30'X50'. It takes three 30'X50' areas to equal 0.1 acre. Cutback borders should be a minimum of 30 feet deep into a wooded area. Measure from the tree trunk back into the wooded area. Do not measure from the branch drip line/shade line or from where the trees fall out into the field.
- Edge feathering may be completed in blocks or in long linear strips along the field edge.
- Cut all trees over 15' tall in the area to be edge feathered. An occasional tree may be left to preserve valuable timber or mast producing species (oak, persimmon, mulberry, etc.). Leave no more than one or two trees over 15 feet tall in the area to be edge feathered.
- Treat all cut stumps with an approved herbicide to prolong the benefits of edge feathering. Leave native shrubs like dogwood and plum if they are less than 15 feet tall. If they are greater than 15 feet tall, cut them off at ground level and DO NOT treat the stumps. Cutting down older stems will encourage new shoot growth.
- If possible, leave felled trees where they fall. Edge feathered trees may be dropped parallel to the fence line/field edge or cut and loosely stacked along the edge of the field. Do not push the downed trees into a dense brush pile.
- Edge feathering may be completed with a chainsaw or mechanical clipper.
- Kill existing grass/vegetation (regardless of type) before edge feathering with an approved herbicide. This provides good growing conditions for annual food plants and shrubs.

### MAINTENANCE:

- Exclude livestock from edge feathered areas.
- Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.
- Edge feathering can be expected to provide quality dense woody cover for 5-10 years. The area should be re-treated when at least 50 percent of the re-growth exceeds 15 feet tall.

## PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:

- Provide natural cover sources for quail and other wildlife.

Consult with NRCS, MDC, or University Extension for additional recommendations.



**Without Edge Feather**

Note the thick grass cover next to the woodland edge and the abrupt transition from grass to woods.



**With Edge Feather**

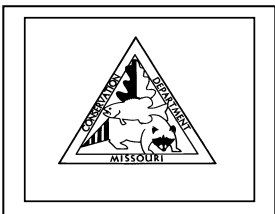
Note the trees felled along the fence line. The loose row of trees provides excellent cover transition and overhead protection. The heavy grass under the trees is dead.



**Open Ground Cover in Edge Feather**

Note the growth of annuals and the open ground under the felled trees. This is the prescription needed.

Comment:



**NRCS/MDC/UMC  
Missouri**



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